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Essential Difference between the Righteous
and Wicked.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED JAN. 14, 1810,

IN THE

NEW SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE,

SALEM.

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SALEM:

PRINTED BY THOMAS C. CUSHING,
1810.

THOUGH the following discourse was hastily penned, without the least view to its publication, and is destitute of artificial ornament ; yet a hope that it might contribute something to the promotion of evangelical truth, at a time when error and iniquity abound, induced the author to comply with the wishes of his friends, in submitting to them a copy for the press.

SERMON.

GENESIS, XVIII. 25.

SHALL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE
EARTH DO RIGHT?

THE history of Abraham is peculiarly interesting and instructive. He is most distinguished and honored among the ancient patriarchs. The scriptures do not inform us of any man, with the exception only of Moses, who was ever admitted to such familiar intercourse with God as Abraham. Joshua, Isaiah, and John the Evangelist, were favored with personal exhibitions of Jehovah in glory ; but Abraham and Moses conversed with him face to face, as a man converses with a friend.

The passage I have chosen for my text, is part of a familiar conversation which Abraham had with God, on the day before the destruction of Sodom, and on the subject of that awful event. The descendants of Ham, it appears, had apostatized in general from the worship of the true God, early after the deluge. Those of them who inhabited Sodom and its neighboring cities, had become so extremely corrupt in the days of Abraham, that the enormity of their wickedness required, that God should make them an example to the world of his righteous judgment. This determination he was pleased to reveal to his servant Abraham. Twenty

four years after the father of the faithful had been a stranger and a pilgrim in the land of Canaan, as he sat in his tent door in the heat of the day, he saw three men, with the appearance of travellers, approach his dwelling. After a hospitable reception and entertainment, according to the simplicity of the times, they proceeded on their way towards Sodom; and the courteous patriarch, leaving his tent, accompanied them some distance on their journey.

As they proceeded together, one of the strangers, who is supposed to have been the Son of God, as he is called LORD, or JEHOVAH, disclosed his purpose of destroying those wicked cities. At this information Abraham was deeply affected. The other two men, who were ministering angels, took their leave of him, and set their faces towards Sodom, leaving him alone with the Lord. Perceiving in whose presence he was, the holy man set himself to intercede for the devoted city. He was chiefly solicitous for the people of God, who he imagined might dwell in Sodom, notwithstanding its crying sins. He might feel a stronger incitement to pray, on account of his nephew Lot, who, with his family, had then resided in Sodom twenty years. The principal argument he used in his intercessions, was a display of the glory of divine justice. He supposed the city to contain a number of righteous persons; and if they were destroyed indiscriminately with the wicked, the Lord's regard for righteousness, and abhorrence of iniquity, would not distinctly appear. He therefore drew near to God, and humbly confessing himself to be dust and ashes, said, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee

to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." Abraham repeated his request, and reduced the number, till the Lord assured him, that if ten righteous persons were found in Sodom, it should be spared. How great were the mercy and condescension of Jehovah! The patriarch returned to his tent, "and the Lord," as the expression is, "went his way." The tremendous event of the ensuing morning is related in the nineteenth chapter of this book.

It appears from the history, that only one pious person was found in all those populous cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim; and the destroying angels could do nothing, till that person was safe in Zoar. As the inhabitants of those cities were set forth as examples suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, to warn the wicked of every succeeding generation, it was necessary, that no child of God should be destroyed in the overthrow.

The righteous may often be involved with the wicked in public calamities, without any impeachment of the divine rectitude; but from judgments, that are designed as perpetual warnings to the world, the people of God must be exempted. Accordingly, when nations are scourged with war, famine, or pestilence, the righteous are sharers in the sufferings. When the Jews were carried captive into Babylon, many pious persons were carried with them. But when the world was to be destroyed by a deluge, an ark was provided for the salvation of Noah: and when Sodom was to be consumed

by fire and brimstone, angels were sent for the rescue of Lot.

The plea, which Abraham used in his intercessions for Sodom, was grounded on this position; *that it is right for God to make an essential difference between the righteous and the wicked.* On this ground explicitly, the Lord admitted his plea, and, therefore, gave the position the sanction of his approbation. "To destroy the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee."

The proposition, that it is right for God to make an essential difference between the righteous and the wicked, I propose to explain, establish and improve.

The term *essential* is here used to express the highest degree. For God to make an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, imports, that his treatment of them is diverse, in relation to their grand interests, computed on the scale of their whole existence.

In regard to the terms *righteous* and *wicked*, it seems needful to remark, that I follow the inspired writers in using *righteous*, to distinguish those, who are made children of God by regeneration and adoption; and *wicked*, to distinguish those, who are in a state of unrenewed nature.

Some are disposed to prevaricate at this use of the terms, on the ground, that none of mankind are righteous, as all are transgressors of the divine law and "concluded under sin." But it will be understood, notwithstanding the groundless cavils of perverse and ignorant men, that when, in scriptural language, we apply the term *righteous* to believers, we exclude the ideas of *merit*, and of *sinless perfection*. Believers are called righteous, because, by their faith in Christ, they are justified for the sake of his righteousness, and, by the sanctifying influen-

ces of the Holy Spirit, are, in a measure, conformed to a righteous God. Unbelievers are called wicked, because, being destitute of faith in Christ, they are under condemnation and the dominion of sin. The scriptures every where make this obvious distinction.

That it is right for God to make an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, I shall attempt briefly to prove by five arguments.

I. It is right, because there is an essential difference between their characters.

That moral agents ought to be treated according to their moral characters, is an axiom, which has the sanction of universal consent.

For want of due attention to the instructions of scripture, and of faith to receive them, a capital mistake is often made, in regard to the real characters of men; and that mistake leads to capital errors concerning their moral states and final destinations. It should be considered, that, in this matter, "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The apparent difference between the righteous and the wicked is always much less than the real. As we cannot search the hearts of men, we cannot obtain absolute knowledge of the pious sincerity of the righteous, nor of the imposing hypocrisy of the wicked. The essential difference in the characters of the righteous and profligate sinners, is sufficiently obvious; but moralists and hypocrites may so counterfeit the language and external conduct of believers, as to be accounted such by men, while the Lord, who knows the vileness of their hearts, sees an essential difference. In our estimate, therefore, of the characters of the righ-

teous and wicked, we must be guided by the testimony of God in his word. This is our only sure guide. If we advert to this testimony, we find the essential difference between their characters described throughout the sacred volume. It is not in the power of language to express this difference with greater distinctness and force, than we find it expressed in the Bible.

Believers are called children of God ; unbelievers are called children of the Wicked One, and the seed of the serpent. Believers are called the friends of God ; unbelievers, his enemies. Believers are called lovers of God ; unbelievers, lovers of this world and of their own selves. Believers are said to be quickened and raised with Christ to newness of life ; unbelievers are said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Believers are declared to be citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, and joint heirs with Christ to the promises of the new covenant ; unbelievers are declared to be aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without God in the world, and children of wrath. Believers are temples of the Holy Ghost, and their members are instruments of righteousness unto God ; unbelievers are subject to the absolute dominion of Satan and their own corruptions, and yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. In short, the Bible represents believers as being habitually actuated by a principle of supreme love to God and sincere regard to his glory ; while it represents unbelievers as being destitute of this gracious principle and benevolent motive, and actuated by a principle and motive hostile to the glory of God and the true interests of his kingdom.

With declarations equivalent to these, the sacred volume abounds. Reference is not given, in these specimens, to chapter and verse, because every per-

son, accustomed to read the scriptures with any attention, knows the representation to be just. How wide, how radical, is the difference of character between the righteous and wicked!

As difference of moral character is the proper ground and reason for difference of treatment, how reasonable is it for God to make an essential difference, in his treatment of mankind, between the righteous and wicked!

II. It is right for God to make this difference, because the principles of goodness and justice require it.

Concerning the nature of these attributes, many entertain erroneous conceptions, and form perverse conclusions.

Goodness is an attribute, whose chief ultimate end is the greatest good of community. A good government is one which promotes and secures the best interests of the nation. A good ruler makes this the grand object of his administration. A good God will certainly govern his universe so as to accomplish this benevolent and vast design. But this design cannot be accomplished without making an essential difference, in the dispensation of rewards and punishments, between the obedient and disobedient. To this truth, our penal statutes, our courts of justice, our prisons, and houses of correction, bear unequivocal testimony. What would be thought of the magistrate, who, in violation of equity and law, should make no distinction between the loyal patriot and the seditious rebel? The principles of goodness and justice are the same in both human and divine government. Every sinful action is injurious to the general good, and that principle, which aims at the general good, demands a punish-

ment for the sinful agent, proportionate to his crime.

Justice is an attribute, which aims at the same ultimate object as goodness. It, therefore, equally requires an essential difference in the divine conduct towards the righteous and wicked. Without making this difference, it would be impossible for God to display before the universe his unchangeable love to holiness, and his utter and everlasting hatred of sin. Without this difference, he would not be manifestly either good or just. Between all the divine perfections subsists the utmost harmony. The most perfect exercise and display of every attribute of God, will be forever made, without the least sacrifice of one to another.

Those egregiously mistake, who imagine that divine justice is not amiable and glorious. It aims at nothing short of the highest good of the universe. Its nature is, therefore, the purest benevolence. Justice is no less essential to the perfection of the divine character, no less amiable and glorious, than goodness and mercy. But, as in human, so in divine government, when subjects persist in breaking over the restraints of law, goodness and justice require, that the welfare of the individual should be sacrificed to the public good, by the execution of condign punishment on incorrigible transgressors.

III. It is right for God to make this difference, because the honor of his name, as supreme Lawgiver, requires it.

The honor of God is deeply concerned in the execution of his law. On the broad basis of the law rest the stability and excellence of his government. Make void his law, and you prostrate forever his honor and his empire. Accordingly, a divine expositor says, "Till heaven and earth pass,

one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Of what avail are penal statutes, if their penalties are never to be executed on condemned criminals? Where is the honor of God as Legislator and Governor of the world, if rebellious men may trample his law under their feet with impunity?

The mediatorial righteousness of Christ, it is true, has honored the divine law, and, of course, the Legislator; so that sinners may be pardoned and saved for Christ's sake. But this, it is ever to be remembered, gives no assurance of salvation to an impenitent sinner; for it is equally true, as the gospel uniformly declares, that this atonement will be of no avail for any, who are not subjects of the new birth, and of true faith in the Divine Mediator.

IV. It is right for God to make an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, because they are not fitted to dwell together.

It has been shown that there is an essential difference in their characters. Persons of opposite principle, motive, inclination, interest, design, and pursuit, cannot dwell in the same society, without discord and war. Enmity will subsist between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The church of God and the wicked world have been in perpetual conflict from the days of Cain and Abel to this day; and the war will not cease till God shall put a final separation between them. For important purposes, hereafter to be more fully disclosed, divine wisdom has appointed their residence together in this world. Wheat and tares must grow in the same field till the harvest. Heaven will consummate the happiness of believers; but unbelievers could enjoy no peace or pleasure in that

holy place. The spiritual worship and service of God, imperfect as it is in this world, the wicked cannot endure. They have no taste for such entertainment. How then could they be happy in a society, from which sin, in all its forms, is entirely excluded? Were impenitent men admitted to heaven, they would turn that blissful realm into a region of rebellion and misery. It is right for God to place mankind in situations for which they are fitted.

V. That it is right for God to make this difference, is evident from what he has said and done.

We may form many safe conclusions concerning the government of God, from the perfections of his nature. We may have the fullest assurance, that all his declarations are strictly true, because he "cannot lie." We may be equally certain, that whatever he does is perfectly right, because he cannot do wrong. If he have told us, that there shall be an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, we may be sure it ought to be made. And if it appear, in any instances, to be actually made, the fact is a sufficient ground for the conclusion that it is made in righteousness.

If we turn our attention to the word and providence of God, we find both declarations and facts to justify this difference. To this point, the text and context afford a most decisive testimony. God admitted Abraham's plea, explicitly on the ground of the justice of this difference. "That the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee." In Isaiah iii. 10, 11, Jehovah gives this command to his prophet: "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given

him." Quotations of the same purport from the sacred oracles might be multiplied almost without end. But this our present limits will not admit. Read the parable of the talents, of the net, of the ten virgins, of the marriage of the king's son, of the tares, of the wicked husbandmen, of the rich man and Lazarus, and the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew.

God not only makes abundant declarations of this difference in his word; but, in some instances, he has actually made it in his providence. Sodom and the old world, as examples to the ungodly of every succeeding age, are a dreadful comment on the inspired declarations concerning the wicked. Though they generally go unpunished in this world, as this is not a state of retribution, but of trial, those instances of exemplary vengeance are recorded on the sacred pages, to warn the wicked of the certainty and awfulness of that wrath, which, without reasonable repentance, will separate them from the redeemed people of God.

We now proceed to an improvement of the subject.

1. If it is right for God to make an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, for the reasons assigned, he will certainly make it. "The Judge of all the earth *will do right*." But that it is made, according to character, in this world, no reasonable man will pretend.

It is a notorious fact, that the honor, power, wealth and pleasure, of this world, in all their varied forms, are, in every age, almost exclusively enjoyed by the wicked; while poverty, reproach, and persecution, with their train of woes, are bitter ingredients in the cup of the righteous. A view of this

fact staggered the faith of some of the ancient saints: "Wherefore," says Jeremiah, "doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that do very treacherously?" Job was led to the same inquiry. "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established before their eyes, their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them."

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus most clearly shows, that this life is not a season for retribution. Indeed, there are numberless dispensations of Providence, which can by no means be reconciled with the supposition, that this world is the only state of retribution. If the essential difference between the righteous and wicked did not extend beyond the present life, God would be manifestly partial to the wicked. His providence would contradict his word. All those judgments, which, at different times, have swept millions into eternity, were acts of distinguishing favor towards those rebellious creatures on whom they fell. If the antediluvians, were, by means of the deluge, immediately delivered from the sins and troubles of this life, and taken to a state of perfect happiness, how much better was it to be drowned in the waters of the flood, than to be preserved, as Noah was, to experience, during hundreds of years, the sorrows and woes of this evil world! The polluted inhabitants of Sodom and its cities, on whom the Lord rained fire and brimstone, were far more highly favored than righteous Lot. Is it not a greater favor to be suddenly taken to perfect rest and glory, than to remain, as Lot did, a poor exile of the mountains, to suffer the calamities of a wearisome pilgrimage? How much better was it to be overwhelmed in the Red Sea with cruel Pharaoh, or to be crushed, in a moment, between the open jaws of the earth, with

impious Korah, than to endure the sufferings of a forty years' travel, in the hostile desert of Arabia! The iniquitous Amorites, who fell by millions before the sword of Joshua, and the proud host of Sennacherib, which the angel of the Lord destroyed in one night, were far more favored than the conquerors of Canaan and the men of Hezekiah. Bloody Herod, whom God smote with a dreadful disease, which soon ended his life, was, for his impiety, a favorite of Heaven. And the crucifiers of Christ, on whom his blood was avenged by the Roman sword, and other signal judgments, were blessed far above the apostles and christians.

If the Judge of all the earth did thus, would he do right? Would he not be partial to the wicked? Would not such a course of providence be the greatest encouragement to sin? Would it not, on this ground, be the part of wisdom, to give ourselves up to the most enormous and daring crimes, in order to provoke the Almighty, by some sudden stroke, to take us immediately to heaven? What glaring absurdity! No. That be far from God, to do after this manner; to favor the wicked above the righteous, or that the wicked should be *as* the righteous. The Judge of all the earth will do right. As the essential difference is not made in this world, it will be made in another.

The above absurd conclusion inevitably results from a denial of future retribution; a conclusion no less impious than absurd. This conclusion cannot be evaded by affirming, that the terrors of death, and the attachment of mankind to the world, render life, in their estimation, a precious privilege, and removal from it a fore calamity. For, however it may be esteemed, if perfect felicity always commence at death, removal from the world is, in fact, the highest imaginable privilege.

But to avoid the shocking conclusion, it may be admitted, that the wicked will be punished in another world, but that their punishment will have an end. The idea of restoration after death from purgatory, is not without its advocates. To this there is one reply, which is forever sufficient and unanswerable; namely: The word of God gives no such intimation. There is not a syllable in the Bible, which gives so much as one obscure hint of a day of grace to the wicked beyond the grave. But, on the contrary, there is ample testimony, that the present life is the only season of gracious trial. The opinion, therefore, of those who believe in a restoration after death, is not only entirely destitute of scriptural warrant, but formed in direct opposition to the declarations of eternal truth.

Let us beware that we neither "change the truth of God into a lie," nor "turn the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into lasciviousness."

But, not to anticipate too much, we infer,

2. That if it is right for God to make an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, it is right for him to make the difference eternal.

If he does right ever to make such a difference, he does right to continue it, so long as the reasons which justify it remain. The principal reasons I have endeavored to specify and explain. The validity of these reasons will never be destroyed. If it is right for God to make this difference now, because there is an essential difference between the characters of the righteous and wicked, it will be always right; for this difference of character will always remain. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy, let him be holy still." A radical change in the moral character of a sinner, depends on the sovereign grace of God; and unless God have une-

quivocally promised to produce this change in every sinner, the conclusion, that it will be produced, is a bold and groundless presumption. But such a promise is no where to be found.

If it is right for God ever to make the difference in view, because the wicked are unfit to dwell with the righteous, it will be always right ; for, as their characters will remain unaltered, their unfitness will forever continue. If the honor of God, as supreme Lawgiver, and the principles of goodness and justice, require this difference, the same reasons will remain forever in unabated force. The good of God's kingdom will require perpetual tokens of his everlasting abhorrence of sin. The person who closes the term of his probation in a state of impenitence, can have no other than the dismal prospect of endless punishment. The Bible, instead of containing a single promise of pardon and salvation to such, is full of declarations of a contrary import. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.—Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.—When the wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish." They who obey not the gospel "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.—The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." At the general resurrection, some, we are assured, will "come forth to shame and everlasting contempt." And the inhabitants of Sodom and of the old world "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Inspired declarations like these, which abound in the scriptures, admit no plausible evasion. Sophistical glosses and artful perversions may impose on the credulity of some, whose inclinations strongly favor the deception ; "but he that is spiritual judg-

eth all things." The perpetuity of the sinner's punishment and of the saint's felicity, is expressed in precisely the same terms; and if the former may have an end, so may the latter. Where then would be the christian's hope in the promises of eternal life? Everlasting punishment is, indeed, a tremendous doctrine; but it is taught in the Bible.

3. If God does right in forever making an essential difference between the righteous and wicked, and has declared this to be his will; then ministers of the gospel ought faithfully to inculcate this momentous truth on their people.

When God says it shall be ill with the wicked, if men say it shall be well, they contradict God and oppose what is right. It is characteristic of false teachers to "declare unto the people smooth things, to prophesy deceits;" and too often the "people love to have it so." But the preacher, who regards the truth of God, and the welfare of immortal souls, will plainly declare the truth, however it may wound the finer sensibilities of his heart. The ministry of the gospel, in this respect, is analagous to the practice of physicians. The medicines they administer, and the operations they perform, though necessary, are often painful both to the physician and the patient.

It is an important part of the duty of watchmen upon the walls of Zion, to warn the wicked of their danger, and point them to the true refuge. They should, indeed, be warned with tender solicitude. But though the utmost tenderness will not secure a faithful minister from the reproach of severity, he has it to consider, that he cannot withhold his warnings, without the guilt of cruelty. Though the professed preacher of the gospel may not have a sufficient regard for God and perishing souls, to in-

duce him to a faithful exhibition of the truth ; yet it should seem, that the fear of appearing in judgment, with his garments encrimsoned with blood; must deter him from going before the people as their guide in the broad way to perdition.

4. If it is right for God to make the difference that has been considered, then the wicked will have no just ground to complain.

It is surely wrong to complain of what is right. When the Judge, on the great day, shall pronounce the irrevocable sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," the miserable souls, against whom it shall be pronounced, will be speechless, as to any complaint of severity in the doom. On that day, we are assured, "every mouth will be stopped." All will be fully convinced of the justice of the sentence, and the wicked will then know themselves to have been their own destroyers. Tremendous as the doom will be, the myriads of saints and angels about the judgment seat, will hear, and say, Amen. It will then be manifest, that God is chargeable with no partiality in giving some repentance unto salvation, and in punishing others according to the demerit of their crimes. Many will not believe till that day, that it is no crime to be just.

If the wicked will then have no ground to complain, they have no ground to complain now, when ministers of the gospel and others exhibit before them their true characters, and point them to that impending doom, which they are warned to escape. For a christian, especially a christian minister, to forbear to warn the impenitent of the consequences of persisting in their sinful course, would be incurably criminal. Yea, those who flatter and deceive the wicked, in this great concern, the wicked themselves will most bitterly execrate, when they

shall see, that everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, is coming upon them without remedy.

5. If it is right, that an essential difference should be made between the righteous and wicked, and it is not made in this world; we infer the necessity of a general judgment.

If the wicked are to be forever separated from the righteous, and suffer eternal punishment, the ground and justice of the separation ought distinctly to appear. In this world, the real ground is often concealed from the view of men, and is never fully discovered. "God hath," therefore, "appointed a day, in which he will judge the world." As he will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, the characters of men will be exhibited in all their extent, and the world will be manifestly judged in righteousness. The true reasons of the different sentences pronounced upon the righteous and wicked, will fully appear, to the conviction of every mind. What surprising things will that day disclose! Every disguise will be stripped from the characters and actions of men. The dark recesses of iniquity will be laid open. The secret machinations of the wicked will be brought to light. The vile works of hypocrisy will be revealed, and the pious sincerity of the righteous made manifest. Thousands, undoubtedly, who are thought, and think themselves, to be heirs of glory, will be found on the left hand. Saints will bow with reverent acquiescence at the righteous decisions of the Judge, while consternation and despair will be depicted in the faces of the wicked. Blessed and holy are they who have part in the first resurrection, on whom the second death will have no power.

6. The truth which has been the topic of this discourse, is calculated to afford comfort to the people of God.

What can afford greater satisfaction to a benevolent mind, than the assurance, that the Judge of all the earth will do right? They are in a measure, and they wish to be entirely, conformed to the will of God. They choose to submit every thing to his judgment and disposal, and as he orders every circumstance throughout his dominion in the best manner to accomplish the grand objects of his government, the desires of their hearts are gratified. "Clouds and darkness," indeed, "are round about him," in respect to many of his ways, as they appear to us; "yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

Christians, God will do right with you. He will order your present allotments, and dispose of your eternal interest, in perfect wisdom and righteousness. And what more for yourselves can you desire? If he correct you, he does right. His paternal rod, though painful, is always salutary to his children. If he throw you into poverty, sickness, reproach, or bereavement, he does right. By such means he weans you from the world. If he give you wealth and honor, or suffer you to fall into snares and temptations, he does right. By such means he tries the constancy of your love to him. If he hide his face from you, he does right. It will teach you the necessity of watchfulness, and the worth of his gracious presence. It will be right for him to recompense your faith and self-denial with endless rest and glory: and this he has promised to do.

He does right with the Church. It is right that he should permit so many heresies, schisms, persecutions, and trials, to perplex, wound and rend

the body of Christ, in its militant state. The wisdom of such dispensations, though much concealed at present, will hereafter be seen and celebrated by the inhabitants of heaven, as great and manifold. In the work of redemption, all the perfections of God will be forever most gloriously displayed.

He does right with the World at large. The dreadful conflict of nations, the rise and fall of states and empires; and the complicated miseries of the human race, are ordered in infinite righteousness, and will be made subservient to most important ends. The renowned ravagers and butchers of mankind, who make the earth groan under incessant wars, rebellions, revolutions, and conquests, are instruments of accomplishing the great purposes of God, though nothing is farther from their design. God will cause the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder.

He does right with impenitent men. It is right for God to endure, with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath; and sometimes to make them examples to the world of his holy indignation at sin. If they perseveringly resist his Spirit, he does right to withdraw his gracious influence, and leave them in blindness and stupidity, to fill the measure of their iniquity, and ripen for their fearful doom. If they place their hearts upon the unrighteous mammon, and pursue it as their portion, he does right to give them the reward they seek, that, like Dives, they may experience a more woful change. Having the Bible in their hands, which so fully presents the terrors of the law and overtures of the gospel, if they reject and condemn the truth of God, he does right to give them up to strong delusions, till "the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies."

God will be forever glorified by every child of Adam, either in their salvation or destruction.

Wait, my christian friends, for the perfect day, which will doubtless bring a full disclosure of the wisdom and rectitude of all the divine conduct. While you see and deplore the fruits of sin in the world, lose not the comfort of this truth, "the Judge of all the earth will do right." But let not this consoling truth restrain your efforts to promote his glory by doing good to men. It will not; it cannot. Your love to God and men will, especially, constrain you, in view of perishing souls, to send your fervent cries to heaven for their salvation.

To conclude. Let every impenitent person, to whom a respite from endless perdition is yet mercifully granted, seriously consider and apply the subject of the present discourse. Abandon every objection against the truth and government of God, and penitently view your true character and condition. A voice from the eternal throne utters the decree, "Except ye repent, ye shall—perish." But the same voice directs you to the hope of the gospel. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Turn," therefore, "turn to the Strong Hold, ye prisoners of hope."

